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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Board of Fire Commissioners to hold meetings on levy lid lift

Granite Falls, Wash. – The Board of Fire Commissioners for Snohomish County Fire District 17, also known as the Granite Falls Fire Department, will consider asking voters to restore funding for emergency medical services through a 7.5-cent “lid lift” this fall.

If approved by voters, the lid lift would cost less than \$23 per year for a home valued at \$300,000. Funding would be used for staffing and offset the rising costs to provide emergency services.

“Call volumes have increased 30 percent for our fire department since 2011,” said Fire Chief Jim Haverfield. “A lid lift will help us meet this increased demand for emergency services.”

The public is invited to attend and comment on the proposal, which will be discussed at two meetings July 13 and 27 at 7:00 p.m. at the Granite Falls Fire Station (116 South Granite Ave, Granite Falls, WA 98252). At the July 27 meeting, fire commissioners will vote on a resolution placing the lid lift on the November General Election ballot.

Funding for the fire department comes from two voter approved levies paid through property taxes: a fire levy of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value (AV) and a levy for emergency medical service (EMS) of \$0.50 per \$1,000 (AV). Over time these levy rates fall, which is why voters are asked to “lift the lid” back to the previously-approved amount. The EMS levy for the Granite Falls Fire Department has fallen from \$.50 to \$.42 per \$1,000 (AV) as of 2017.

State law limits a fire district’s annual budget increase to 1% per year, but the cost to provide service is often higher than that. More emergency calls means added costs for things like personnel, equipment, fuel, maintenance, utilities, and state fees.

Chief Haverfield said that hiring one more full-time firefighter is important to provide better coverage for the community and continue to meet demand for service.

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Snohomish County Fire District 17, also known as the Granite Falls Fire Department, started in 1907 to provide protection to farms and mills around the City of Granite Falls. Today, it provides fire and emergency medical service to 12,000 citizens across 38.5 square miles, including city residents who annexed to the district in 1987. The fire district is proud to be debt free, operate under a balanced budget and has passed all financial and accountability audits by the state.

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